

Story 2141 (1999 Tape 4)

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Location: Gözsüz village,
Malkara kaza,
Tekirdağ Prov-
ince

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A Fitting Retort

A peasant with very large feet walked from his village to the county seat to buy a pair of shoes. He looked in one shoe store after another but was unable to find a pair his size. One shoe salesman said to him, "Brother, what shapeless feet you have! It is not surprising that you cannot find a suitable pair of shoes."

Discouraged and offended, the peasant walked back toward his village with his pack on his back and his çariks¹ on his feet. He walked and walked and finally reached his village.

¹Çariks were the footwear of rural Turks until the middle of the 20th century. The çarık is a sandal with a turned-up toe. It is made of camel skin or donkey skin. Initially a pair of çariks are identical, not one for the right foot and the other for the left. To fit them to one's feet, one must soak them in water for some time. After putting on very heavy socks, the owner then must tie the wet çariks tightly upon his or her feet. The çariks must not be taken off or even untied until they are completely dried, at which time one fits exactly the left foot and the other fits exactly the right foot. Most rural Turks now wear ordinary shoes, but in the interim between çariks and shoes many peasants wore foot covering made from the recycled rubber of worn-out automobile tires.

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Before he entered his house, he turned his back to the front door and looked in the direction of the town he had left. "You are the shapeless one!" he cried.